

Ag in the Classroom takes hands-on approach to agriculture

By Leslie Mitts
Spilyay Tymoo

The plot of land may be small, but the OSU extension office uses it to the fullest for the Ag in the Classroom Program.

The small area of land behind the extension office that they used last year while raising pigs was converted into a garden after some hard work from fourth grade students at Warm Springs Elementary.

According to Fara Ann Brummer, "The fourth grade has been kind enough to let me in to work with them."

After raising chickens during the first year of the project and pigs during the second, she said, they knew the soil would be incredibly rich and wanted to capitalize on that.

For that reason, they decided to plant a garden this year. It includes vegetables that will later be used in local home economic programs.

But the program didn't involve merely planting. According to Brummer, "The Ag in the Classroom Program is a wonderful program because it really focuses on learning skills for the youth."

Part of the main focus this year involved teaching students about where the food they eat is produced and how that is done.

"As far as they're concerned, it comes from Safeway," Brummer said.

Though the garden did face complications in the form of cold weather and birds eating at the plants, Brummer said they have managed to grow some produce.

Students were even able to start plants inside the classroom this year.

"The fourth grade teachers truly were wonderful," Brummer said. "They kind of did a pre-preparation."

The program is also designed to help the teachers by involving curriculum from a variety of subjects, she added.

Luckily the Ag in the Class-



Leslie Mitts/Spilyay

Myra Johnson worked with the OSU extension office's program to teach students about native roots.

room Program will be able to continue next year because of funds received from the Johnson O'Malley committee in Warm Springs.

Brummer is also going to work with the program in Crook County in order to gain ideas for the students in Warm Springs. "They have a dynamite program there," she explained.

Though the idea of raising a dairy cow or raising turkeys in upcoming years has been discussed, she said, a lot depends on the space they have.

"We can only do so much," she said. "We have limited space back there."

According to Brummer, "We're limited in what we can do back here as far as hands on projects."

But that won't stop her from striving to teach students as much as possible about agriculture—and it's something she feels is necessary in today's society.

Since recent studies suggest that the majority of Oregon's farmers are senior citizens, Brummer said, "People don't want to do agriculture anymore and so we're trying to spark interest on the part of the youth."

The hands-on projects, she said, are what help to do just that.

"When you relate to it, and feel it, and smell it and work with

it, it becomes somehow real to you," Brummer explained.

As for the students' reactions, she said, "They love it."

Students kept a notebook with logs of everything they learned and the progress that was made, Brummer added.

At the end of the program they held a contest to see who had learned the most and documented it in their notebook.

Of course, Brummer said, "They love the outside portion much more than the inside portion."

In her opinion, "I think there is just a natural connection between children and the outside world."

Since the weather hindered the garden's progress, Myra Johnson from the Culture and Heritage Department lent a hand to teach the students about native roots.

"She did an excellent job," Brummer said.

Johnson taught the students about processing and preparing the roots, but also how to cultivate the plants.

Though it differs from the method of gathering roots from the wild, Brummer said, "It's not an opposing way of doing it."

"That was a really neat aspect to this year's program," she added. "The kids just loved it."

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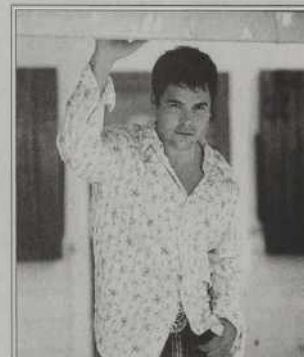
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